

# ART WORLD EXPAT

BY LISA BROWN

+ PHOTO BY JOE SCHMELZER

**The artist in his element:** Fabrice Spies at his Los Angeles studio. His art will be on display at the Las Vegas Art Expo, Sept. 28 to 30 at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. The three-day fine art fair is preceded by an invitation only Gallery Preview, Sept. 27, 6 p.m.–9 p.m. Visit [artexpos.com](http://artexpos.com) for more info.

**It's a long way from Southern France to Southern California.** Following 15 years in the restaurant business, St. Cézaire native Fabrice Spies relocated to Los Angeles in search of an intangibility his beloved homeland failed to offer. "I needed to leave, to do something different," he notes.

As luck would have it, the intrepid artist became fast friends with an American, prompting his serendipitous move to the States. Spies immediately took matters into his own hands—learning English entirely via language submersion. Self-taught not just in this and his painting, but in many other arenas as well, his modus operandi is to place himself in sink-or-swim situations in order to accelerate the educational process.

Following the opening of his first gallery-organized solo exhibit Sept. 19, Spies will travel to Las Vegas, where he plans to show two original pieces at the Art Expo. The 29-year international fine art fair takes its show on the road, expanding from New York City to Nevada.

In a homogenized world where seemingly everything is a copy of a copy, to maintain authenticity and cultivate an inimitable perspective can be an overwhelmingly daunting task. But Spies, primarily a landscape painter, is more than up to the challenge. While it's entirely possible—if not altogether probable—that someone else has already captured a particular view in which he finds

his inspiration, Spies adds a personal touch, striving to make it his own.

A successful restaurateur background taught Spies control and discipline, which play crucial roles in his life as an artist—from the planning of a gallery showing to the practice of his craft itself. "I don't paint like most of the artists I see," he says. "I start from the top and I go down. Even my painting is organized."

The brightness of Spies's palette is heavily influenced by the colors of Provence, which permeate each of his canvases. Downtown Los Angeles has also performed a vital role; coming from a small village with a population of approximately 1,800, the dramatic streetscapes and urban architecture provide him with constant aesthetic stimulation. Perhaps the most striking example of this is "Bradbury," a sprawling acrylic on canvas piece to which Spies devoted 120 hours of painstaking effort. The result—a timeless visual record of this historic building's dizzying geometry.

Upon his return to California, the French transplant will take on a new project—perhaps a painting of Dodger Stadium—for one of his biggest clients in downtown L.A.

"If you asked me five years ago where I'd be now, I had no idea," Spies says. "Coming from where I'm from with no background whatsoever, no art school or anything, and to get to be in Vegas—it's phenomenal." **HD**

